Terrorist Groups Are Aligning To Conduct Global Terrorism

By:

John R. Fraser

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

Breyer State University

February 2003

Faculty & Administrative Approval by:

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Figure 1 - Signed dissertation approval

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Preface

Terrorism has always been a topic of interest and the recent World Trade Tower and Pentagon attacks have brought this topic to the forefront in the minds of many. Terrorists commit acts of violence against victims who are not of military origin for the purpose of promoting an ideal or philosophy that they hold to be true. Their goal in committing these heinous acts is to control a population by fear. Why and how these groups operate is an intriguing topic.

In recent years, the basic form and structure of terrorist organizations has shown a shift in ideology. The targets and motives have changed as well as the basic structures of the groups themselves. Terrorist groups used to represent isolated groups who held one ideology. Now these groups are forming splinter elements and some groups are beginning to combine to form a type of “super-terrorist” organization. They may have different ideologies, but they feel that they have a common enemy and are becoming more willing to work together against a common enemy; particularly the United States of America and others whom they feel are in opposition to their philosophy. This movement towards grouping together for common goals is the reason for pursuing this dissertation.

The purpose of this treatise is to explore in detail, the development of these terrorist coalitions from the previously single terrorist groups. The purpose is not to simply present a chronology of the events and how they evolved, but to explore in-depth the reasons why they evolved. The world has benefited from many advances in
technology such as cellular telephones and the Internet that make mass communication over long distances much easier than in the past. This dissertation will explore the role that this new technology has played in the ability of terrorist groups to coordinate efforts on a global basis.

It is the researcher’s hope to approach these topics in a manner that produces results utilizing data analysis obtained from historical records that will support the idea that these groups are developing vast global networks and may be planning a coordinated global assault. This is a difficult task as there is a wealth of information available on the subject. However, much of it exists in the realm of sensationalist journalism and is of no scientific value. The United States Department of State publishes yearly reports that are available to the public containing summaries of terrorist activities. These reports will be examined for the purposes of establishing patterns and frequency of terrorist activity.

It would be easy to compile a list of terrorist activities and their locations to study trends. However, that type of report would be no more than an encyclopedia article on the history of terrorism. This dissertation will go beyond being a report on terrorism and will explore the how and why questions behind these numerical trends.

This research differs from standard dissertation research in several ways. First, it will be conducted using only documents from the US Department of State and other reliable government sources. Secondly, the sample population will be small. Usually this is a problem in academic studies, if the sample size is too small, the research will not be applicable to a larger population, or the results will not be
conclusive. This will not be an issue for this study due to the uniqueness of the subject matter. The study will focus on terrorist events that have already occurred and the sample size will be small.

Many academic studies are performed for the purpose of predicting future events. They are performed to establish a pattern and then use that pattern to make future predictions on how a person will act, how helpful a drug will be against a certain disease, or whether something will or will not occur. In the case of this study, it would be impossible to make such a prediction. There are simply too many variables to predict future trends in terrorist attacks, let alone where the next attack will occur based upon what motive. This is the job of the government and international agencies and cannot be predicted in the same manner as a traditional academic study. This type of prediction is best left to the agencies that specialize in such activities.

This study wishes to examine the current trends in terrorist activities without being predictive as has been discussed before. This leaves one wondering why conduct it at all. The answer to this question is that terrorism is no longer the problem of individual countries where terrorism has struck most frequently, but has become a global issue and the governments of the world are now working together in a concerted effort to combat it. Government agencies have put together many reports, which summarize terrorist activities. However, these reports do not identify the trends in depth and act as the type of encyclopedic article discussed earlier. It is the purpose of this dissertation to use this information to spot trends and patterns that
may not be obvious when reading formal reports. It is the researcher’s goal to give greater depth and meaning to the numbers in the reports.

Moreover, it is the researcher’s hope to produce a study that makes connections and show trends towards a combining of forces by terrorist groups not obvious to the average reader. In this way, these activities can be analyzed and may even lead to better policies towards combating terrorism. It is not enough to know how many terrorist activities there were over a number of years. The activities, funding and future plans of these terrorist groups must be studied in order for global solutions to be implemented that will be effective in the war against terrorism.

Terrorist groups are no longer small individual entities that can be dealt with by a local government. As the world moved toward greater globalization, so have terrorist groups as well. The strategy for dealing with these groups must be changed or modified in order to better combat them and protect the citizens of the world. This is the ultimate goal of this dissertation, which is to be able to bring synthesis to myriad information contained in State Department documents. It is unlikely that future efforts to deter terrorist activity will be successful if the plans for dealing with the attacks are archaic or ill conceived. The methods for dealing with terrorists must be modified to meet the threat of the globalized terrorist organization. In order to accomplish this, interconnections between these groups must be found and reported. This becomes, therefore, the purpose of this dissertation.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my committee members who have been of great assistance and moral support in the accomplishment of this endeavor. I would like to thank everyone for his or her patience and mentorship. I would like to especially thank my wife for her support and understanding during my long periods of absence during the research, composition, and revision phases of this dissertation. I would additionally like to thank the President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, and the men and women of the armed forces of the United States whose brave actions and courage inspired me to pursue a topic of global concern.
Dedications

The first and foremost persons to whom this dissertation is dedicated are the families of the victims and the victims themselves who have been the targets of terrorist activities. It is especially dedicated to those who suffered loss in the largest and most devastating terrorist attack in the history of the world, the attack on the World Trade Towers, September 11, 2001. It is further dedicated to those who experienced loss in that terrible tragedy and to those who lost their lives while attempting to save others.

This dissertation is dedicated to the faithful government agencies such as the CIA, NSA, DIA, FBI, DoD, and other government organizations worldwide that track those who might wish to do harm to the citizens of the United States of America. It is through the efforts of these agencies, that the attempts of terrorists are foiled or minimized in severity.
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Definitions of Terms

The following is a list of terms that will be used in this report, which may be unfamiliar to the reader.

**Domestic terrorism** – defined as acts of terrorism that do not involve citizens of more than one country.

**Financing activities** – will be defined to include the provision of training facilities, weapons, or financing for such activities.

**Globalized terrorist** – terrorist who operate in multiple countries to achieve a common goal.

**International terrorism** – may also be referred to as “global terrorism,” meaning terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country.

**Noncombatant** – a non-military person who is untrained in the ways and methods of combat. It can include civilians, or military personnel, who at the time of the attack are unarmed and/or are not on duty.

**State-funded** - countries that allow terrorist to train and reside in their country, unfettered and unabated. The countries may provide money, weapons, training, safe haven, and funding.

**Sub-national** – not being or operating under the jurisdiction of a recognized nation.

**Support activities** - will be defined to include such activities as to knowingly allow terrorist groups or terrorist cells to obtain safe haven in a country or area and to protect them from outside harm. It will also include financing activities.
Super-terrorist - a term developed by the author of this report to describe the alignment of like-minded terrorist groups under a single focused organization. It is not a term used or contained in official US State Department documents.

Terrorism - is defined as premeditated, politically or religiously motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or agents of those groups, usually intended to influence or control an audience.

Terrorist activity – acts of violence directed at a noncombatant group in an attempt to control or influence that group. It also involves training to conduct such activity.

Terrorist cell – a sub-group associated with a major terrorist organization. They may be operating in the same country as the core group, or may be operating abroad with a connection to the core group.

Terrorist group - any group or sub-group that engages or intends to engage in terrorist activities.
List of Symbols and Abbreviations

The following is a list of symbols and abbreviations that will be used in this report.

AL-GAMA’AT AL-ISLAMIYYA – the Islamic Group, IG.


ANO – Abu Nidal.

APA – American Psychological Association.

ASBAT AL-ANSAR —the Partisans’ League.

CBRN – Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear weapons.

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency.

DEL SOL – Devrimci Sol, a.k.a. Revolutionary Left.

DFLP – Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a.k.a. CNPZ.

DIA – Defense Intelligence Agency.

DHKP/C – Revolutionary Peoples’ Liberation Party/Front.

DOS – Department of State.

ETA – Basque Fatherland and Liberty.

FARC – Revolutionary Army Forces of Columbia.

FATHAH – Palestine Liberation Organization.

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation.

FPM – Morazanist Patriotic Front.
FPMR – Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front.

G – Global terrorist groups operating in multiple countries and territories.

GIA – Armed Islamic Group.

HAMAS – Islamic Resistance Movement.

HUM – Harakat ul-Mujahidin (Movement of Holy Warriors).


ID – Identification, official identification cards or documents.

IRA – Irish Republican Army.

JEM - Jaish-e-Mohammed (Army of Mohammed).

JIHAD – holy war.

L – Local terrorist groups, operating in one country and its territories.

NSA – National Security Agency.

PFLP-CG – Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – Genera Command.

PIJ – Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

PKK – Kurdistan Workers’ Party.

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization.

UN – United Nations.

US – United States.

USDS – United States Department of State.

Abstract

Terrorist Groups Are Aligning To Conduct Global Terrorism

Terrorism was once a topic limited to certain sectors of the world, such as the Middle East or South Africa. However, in recent years, it appears that no one is safe in any part of the globe. A growing number of countries must take measures to protect citizens and visitors from the threat of terrorism. The United States of America is the latest addition to this list. It has become evident in recent years that terrorism is no longer a localized event, but rather an increasing global problem. It has also become obvious that terrorism requires a global solution as well. Evidence has been mounting that terrorist groups are beginning to connect and form alliances. This gives them greater strength and greater resources. It seems they are finding common ground and are beginning to coordinate efforts. This will be the topic of the proposed research. The research contained in this dissertation supports the formation of terrorist coalitions by examining extensive information contained in United States Department of State Annual Reports on Patterns of Global Terrorism. It examines the recent trend towards former single terrorist organizations forming alliances in order to conduct large-scale global acts of terrorism. The findings of this report support the thesis that terrorist groups indeed are cooperating for the purposes of a common cause. The interconnectivity of financing and the sharing of training grounds for these groups are examined in detail. Better communications technology has played a significant role in the formation of these groups and the abilities of these groups to conduct coordinated acts of terrorism against multiple nations.
Synopsis

The following dissertation will focus on the issue of global terrorism. It will study the trends in terrorism and will support the thesis that terrorist groups are forming alliances in an attempt to launch multiple and massive global attacks. The data will be collected and the trends will be examined using Annual Reports filed by the Department of State detailing terrorist activity by year.

It would seem as if the work being performed here is redundant and is already contained in these State Department reports. However, if one delves into years of these 150-200 page government documents, one will find that they only serve as an accounting system of terrorist activities. Each report does not summarize the results of the previous reports. Each year only contains information for its own year. There are no connections, trends, or inferences, only raw data and facts for that particular year. The purpose of this research will be to put this information into an easy to understand format, to test for the emergence of patterns and trends in the data.

From the concept and initial research contained in the proposal to the final writing of this report several factors emerged that were not foreseen in the preliminary research and these required some changes in initial methodology. For instance, in the Methodology section of this report, the terrorist incidents were to be divided into positive for global terrorism and negative for local terrorism. When the actual data was examined, it was found that other categories were more appropriate. These exact changes will be discussed in the Methodology section of this report.
In addition, it was the original intent to obtain exact figures concerning the number of times cellular telephones and technology were an aid to the terrorists in their ability to carry out an attack. It was found that specifics of the attacks are classified by the Department of State and are not available to the public. However, the 2001 Annual Report provides a section on the State Department findings regarding how terrorists use technology to carry out their missions (USDS, 2002, online).

Chapter 1 will discuss the rationale behind the project and provides a brief historical background into the topic. It also states the thesis and presents the research questions that the dissertation hopes to answer. It discusses preliminary research into the topic and gives an overview of recent trends in terrorist activities. It will not count the number of terrorist attacks, but will give an idea of general trends that may help to devise ways to thwart their efforts.

Chapter 2 will consist of the Literature Review. The literature review for this dissertation will differ from most traditional literature review sections in that it will deal with only one type of report. This report is a government document of standard format and is published every year. This literature review must not only review its contents, but must give insight as to how this report is laid out in order to gain a better understanding of the data and how it was obtained. Newspapers and other third party sources were not used to conduct this research.

Chapter 3 is the methodology section and will discuss the data collection methods, treatment of the data, and how and where the data was obtained. The
methodology section for this particular report will explain the unique data collection and coding method used to analyze data for this dissertation. Some types of data for this dissertation cannot be easily put into quantifiable terms. Some data types for this dissertation are subjective in nature. The treatment of this type of data is thoroughly discussed in this section.

Chapter 4 discusses the data analysis and results obtained in this report. This section will discuss the treatment and interpretation methods of various data types used in this report. It will discuss how sample validity was maintained.

Chapter 5 will discuss the limitations of the study and will make recommendations for improving on the shortcomings of this research. It will make recommendations as to what might be included in future research projects.

Chapter 6 will contain the summary and conclusions drawn by the study. Much of this section will be subjective, as the data used was subjective in nature. Certain patterns did emerge during the research conducted for the study and these findings will be discussed in detail.

This report will summarize and integrate trends and patterns that were not pointed out in approximately 1650-2200 pages of government reports. The reports themselves are exhaustive but are not conclusive in nature. It is the purpose of the study to bring meaning to these volumes of information. Trends are developing and long established patterns of terrorism are beginning to emerge into new trends and patterns. If the new global community is to combat terrorism, then they must understand these new trends in terrorism.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Terrorist activities have been a part of culture since the beginnings of humanity. Espionage and counterespionage has been a popular subject in literature and historical writing since the beginning of time. One only needs to read the Greek Classics, Norse Sagas, or the Tales of Sheherazhad and the Thousand and One Arabian Nights to realize that the idea of using terrorism to control a population is not a new concept at all. In the classic tales, terrorism was limited to a few rogue persons who usually had a vendetta against a particular person or group.

As stated, terrorism is as old as society itself. Differences in politics and religions have been the traditional motives. Terrorist groups are typically small groups of people who are opposed to some ideal or institution held by the government or another group. These people feel that the defense of their position is justified by violence against a societal group in order to “send a message” or garner attention for their cause.

Terrorism is an act of violence against a person or group of persons for the purpose of controlling or influencing the target group. There is no internationally accepted definition of terrorism. However, the aforementioned tenants are generally accepted by the world at large and summarize a list of criteria established by the United States Department of State to distinguish acts of terrorism from other common street crimes or personal vendettas.
A small attack, such as bombing a diplomat’s car or an incident that involves a small number of casualties is generally considered an act of terrorism. However, if the event is of large scale and produces a huge number of casualties, such as the attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, they may be considered an act of war instead of acts of terrorism, as in this case. In such case, the act of war was carried out by a non-government entity, and not by a foreign government. Typically, acts of war are carried out between one government entity against another government entity. However, the attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon were considered acts of war, even though a known terrorist group carried it out. Therefore, when President Bush declared war on terrorism, it cannot be confused with declaring war on Iraq, another government entity. It is important to make these distinctions in definition when discussing issues that have this degree of diplomacy involved. They are also important concepts to fully understand when conducting research on terrorism as well.

In recent times, the advent of better communication systems has enabled terrorist groups to use technology to their advantage. In addition, they have developed a large infrastructure that supplies them with weapons, training, and the funds needed to operate. Many of these groups are now state-funded. These groups usually consist of less than a hundred people who usually have a complaint against another group of people for one reason or another. However, there has been a recent trend for various groups to express dissatisfaction over similar issues and to speak against the same topics. These groups have realized that they may have slightly
different motivations, but they feel they have a common enemy. Consequently, many of these groups have formed alliances and are launching cooperative efforts against certain target groups. They have a solid funding structure, have identified countries that are willing to provide them safe haven, and are now developing splinter cells in numerous countries. They have the communications abilities to launch a concerted attack in multiple locations at the same time via these splinter groups.

In the past, terrorist activities were considered only a threat in certain regions of the world, such as in the Middle East and South America. This is no longer the case. As the world moves towards a global marketplace and a global community, these acts now cross boundaries and lines as never before. Terrorist groups are striking out against anyone who is a perceived enemy or anyone whom they feel assists or supports their enemy. This means their target base is getting larger. This will also mean that it will become increasingly more difficult to trace acts of terrorism to particular groups. For instance, a group may strike out at British Airways carrying important US diplomats and because the attack was not directed at a US target, it may be difficult to identify the suspects or motives. As most terrorist groups wish everyone to know why an act was committed, it is doubtful whether these indirect attacks will achieve their goals.

Our ability to track these groups has gotten better over the years as well, but so has their ability to evade new technologies. State departments, embassies and intelligence gathering organizations throughout the world have massive databases documenting the activities of these groups. This includes a large electronic journal
published online by the US Department of State which highlights and summarizes terrorist activity by year. As one examines the data available, as well as excerpts from the journals obtained, one can begin to see a pattern of more interconnectivity between these groups, a commitment to common goals, and many other signs that lead us to believe that these groups are gaining power and represent a major threat on a global basis. This will be the subject of the study.

The study will encompass the years 1991 through 2001 and will contain information from as many sources as possible. The sources must be in English or an English translation. The study will use as much information from as many credible sources as possible in order to make comparisons and contrasts between information about the same group from different sources. These contrasts will be analyzed to determine if there was an effect on the validity of the conclusions.

The study will include the activities of as many known terrorist groups as possible. However, it will focus on Middle Eastern groups, primarily those funded and supported by Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Iran, with particular emphasis on those associated with Usama bin-Laden. There are several reasons for this focus; one is that there is a vast amount of information available regarding the activities and connections between these groups. In addition, these groups have a long history of terrorism and are the ones most likely to form a cooperative effort against their sworn enemy, the United States, and anyone who supports the U.S.

Groups in other countries will be examined, primarily to determine if they are connected to the Usama bin-Laden groups, for instance, if they are acting as a